

Many Counties Experiencing Devastating Effects of Irene Await Major Disaster Declaration

Washington, DC -- A bipartisan group of 20 New York U.S. House members today thanked President Obama for expediting the Major Disaster Declaration process for several New York Counties and requested that the President quickly approve all 26 counties identified in Governor Cuomo's request for federal disaster assistance. So far, 19 counties have been made eligible for Public Assistance (PA), and 8 counties have been made eligible for Individual Assistance (IA). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is currently reviewing the remaining counties to determine their eligibility for federal assistance.

Counties eligible for PA will receive assistance with emergency work and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities. Those counties so designated include: Albany, Bronx, Clinton, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Greene, Montgomery, Nassau, New York, Queens, Rensselaer, Richmond, Rockland, Schoharie, Suffolk, Ulster, Warren, and Westchester.

Counties eligible for IA will receive direct assistance for individuals, families and businesses whose property has been damaged or destroyed and whose losses are not covered by insurance. Those counties so designated include: Albany, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Greene, Schenectady, Schoharie, and Ulster.

Governor Cuomo has identified 26 counties in New York that continue to see devastating effects from Hurricane Irene including flooding, power outages, road and bridge closures, and infrastructure damages. Those counties include: Albany, Bronx, Clinton, Columbia, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Greene, Kings, Montgomery, Nassau, New York, Orange, Putnam, Queens, Rensselaer, Richmond, Rockland, Schenectady, Schoharie, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster, Warren, Washington and Westchester.

The six counties awaiting Major Disaster Declarations include Columbia, Kings, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan and Washington.

The 20 U.S. House members were led by Reps. Maurice Hinchey (NY-22), Nita Lowey (NY-18) and Paul Tonko (NY-21) and also include Reps. Chris Gibson (NY-20), Eliot Engel (NY-17),

Pete King (NY-3), Steve Israel (NY-2), Timothy Bishop (NY-1), Gary Ackerman (NY-5), Gregory Meeks (NY-6), Joseph Crowley (NY-7), Jerrold Nadler (NY-8), Charles Rangel (NY-15), Edolphus Towns (NY-10), Yvette Clarke (NY-11), Michael Grimm (NY-13), Carolyn Maloney (NY-14), José Serrano (NY-16), Bill Owens (NY-23) and Nan Hayworth (NY-19).

The full text of the letter to President Obama follows. A PDF can be found [here](#).

August 31, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write to thank you for supporting Governor Andrew Cuomo's expedited request for a Major Disaster Declaration as a result of flooding and damage caused by Hurricane Irene, which made landfall in New York on August 28, 2011.

Hurricane Irene has caused destruction to both public and private property throughout the East Coast, and comprehensive assistance is vital in order to allow families and local municipalities to deal with the incurred damage. At least six fatalities are confirmed in New York, flooding has damaged infrastructure and homes, and hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses remain without electricity. Initial estimates put the cost of the damage at over \$6 billion along the entire eastern seaboard.

New York State's initial assessment identified 26 counties damaged by Irene. Nearly 5,000 New Yorkers have been evacuated from their homes and remain in shelters. Reports of catastrophic damage to bridges and roads indicate that the federal government's assistance is necessary. Local governments need assistance to repair roads, bridges and other infrastructure damaged

or destroyed. Residents and small businesses will need help repairing and rebuilding their homes. Many New Yorkers will not be able to afford repairs without FEMA's Public and Individual Assistance programs and activation of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program statewide. We ask that you continue to oversee the implementation of a FEMA-led response and recovery plan as quickly as possible.

Given the scope of the devastation caused by Hurricane Irene, we appreciate that you approved several of the requested counties for Individual and Public Assistance, and ask that you approve all counties requested by Governor Cuomo. The assistance of FEMA and other federal agencies is urgently needed to prevent further infrastructure damage, ensure public health and safety, restore public utilities and transportation systems, and recover from tremendous public and private property damage.

Thank you again for recognizing the serious damage caused by Irene and approving Governor Cuomo's request for a Major Disaster Declaration. For the residents and communities of New York State, this declaration and subsequent federal assistance are necessary to rebuild from the storm.

Sincerely,